Victoria, British Columbia

The stop nobody books the cruise for, and the one the cruise legally cannot happen without.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Alaska cruises from Seattle call at Victoria, British Columbia because of the Passenger Vessel Services Act, 46 U.S.C. section 55103, which bars foreign-flagged ships from transporting passengers between US ports. The penalty is $798 per passenger and falls on the carrier. Ogden Point has four deep-sea berths and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority puts the city centre approximately 2.4 km, or 1.49 miles, away.

Facts checked against official sources on 24 September 2026

THE STOP I NEARLY SLEPT THROUGH

By day seven of an Alaska cruise you are full. Full of glaciers, full of mountains, full of getting up early. And then the ship pulls into Canada at bedtime and you think, do I really want to?

Go out anyway, even if it is only to stand on the deck and watch the city come up in the dark, which is what I did and it was lovely.

But understand what this stop is. Victoria is not on your itinerary because someone thought you would enjoy it. It is there because without it, your cruise would be illegal. I find that genuinely interesting and nobody ever explains it, so I am going to.

Book it from your phone

Tours in Victoria: the bookings Granny uses, one scan away.

Point your phone camera at a code. Your phone opens the booking page. No camera app? Type the web address printed under the code.

Victoria shore excursions

Cruise-only tours with a return-to-ship guarantee. Non-refundable from 14 days before the tour.

SHORE EXCURSIONS GROUP

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VIATOR

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Travel insurance

Compare cruise travel insurance plans side by side before final payment.

SQUAREMOUTH

aicruisegranny.com/go/insurance

Check the official source

Rules, prices and hours change. Scan to open the official page and confirm before you go. These are not paid links.

Travel documents
Canada Border Services

Cruise operations
Victoria Harbour Authority

Cruise passengers
Butchart Gardens

Full guide online: photos, live prices and the latest updates at **aicruisegranny.com/port-victoria**

Booking codes are affiliate or travel-agent links: AI Cruise Granny may earn a commission at no extra cost to you. Prices, rules and availability are set by each company; check them before you book.

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Getting ashore	Ships dock at **Ogden Point**: four deep-sea berths across two piers. Pier A is 1,100 feet and 800 feet; Pier B is two berths of 1,040 feet each.
Into town	The Harbour Authority states: *"The city centre is approximately 2.4 km (1.49 miles) away."*
Country	**Canada.** This is a foreign port and the rules change.
How busy	The Harbour Authority calls Ogden Point *"the busiest cruise ship port-of-call in Canada"* — **311 calls in 2025**
2026 season	10 April to 13 October 2026
Terminal	Open 24 hours, year round, with customs and immigration facilities on site

At the Victoria, BC: Ogden Point Cruise Terminal (Breakwater District) cruise port: what's there

Port facts checked on 30 October 2026. Shops, prices and opening hours change, so check on the day.

Victoria is usually the last stop on a Seattle round trip, and very often an evening one. On our 2018 cruise I simply watched the city light up from the deck, which was lovely in its own right. If you do go ashore, Ogden Point is a proper terminal with gift shops, currency exchange, restrooms and a market on cruise days, and the Breakwater with its lighthouse starts right beside it. If I were staying close to the ship, I'd walk the Breakwater, eat at the Bistro and save town for the shuttle.

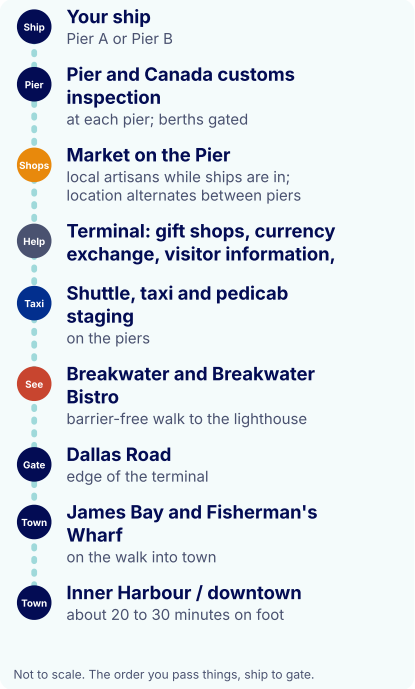
See the official port map

The port side publishes its own map. We link to it rather than copy it, so you always see the current layout. Open it before you sail and save a screenshot to your phone. Map by Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (with SSA Marine).

aicruisegranny.com/go/victoria-port-map

From the ship: Ogden Point Cruise Terminal (Pier A and Pier B)

Four deep-sea berths on two piers (Pier A: 1,100 ft and 800 ft; Pier B: two of 1,040 ft). GVHA owns it; SSA Marine operates it. Customs and immigration at each pier; berths are gated. City centre about 2.4 km (1.49 miles) away. 311 calls in 2025; the 2026 season ran 10 April to 13 October.



Our own simple drawing, not the port's map.

Free things to do inside the port

Ogden Point Breakwater Free — A barrier-free walkway out to sea alongside the terminal, ending at a lighthouse, with the Unity Wall mural (painted since 2009). GVHA gives its length as 800 m in one place and 762 m in another.
Beside the terminal; about a 2-minute walk from the gangway (Bucket List Guides)
Access: GVHA describes it as barrier-free.

Market on the Pier Free — Local artisan market that runs while cruise ships are in, on Pier B's north (Helijet) side near the red-roofed building or in front of the big blue building on Pier A (GVHA, 2025 season page). Browsing is free.
Pier A or Pier B

Dallas Road waterfront walk Free — The shoreline path that runs alongside the terminal; GVHA calls it a scenic walk.
Starts at the terminal edge
Access: Reported as flat and paved, with some uneven sections and poor lighting at night (third-party guides).

Fisherman's Wharf Free — Food kiosks, small shops, eco-tour operators and float homes in James Bay (GVHA). Free to wander.
James Bay, on the way into town; about 10 minutes from the ship (Bucket List Guides)

Pools and beaches

No beach or pool at the terminal — Ogden Point is a deep-sea terminal; there is no port beach or pool.

Food and drink

Breakwater Bistro — Restaurant at Ogden Point by the start of the Breakwater, named on GVHA's terminal page and marked on the terminal map.
Ogden Point, by the Breakwater

Fisherman's Wharf food kiosks — Floating food kiosks along the wharf (GVHA).
James Bay

Shopping

Terminal gift shops — Gift shops on site at Ogden Point (GVHA, Princess).
Terminal

Market on the Pier — Local makers selling on cruise days; Bucket List Guides reports 40-plus artisans.
Pier A or Pier B

Restrooms, Wi-Fi, money and help

Public restrooms Free — Public toilets on the pier (GVHA).
On the pier

Currency exchange — Foreign currency exchange dockside (GVHA). Canada uses Canadian dollars.
Dockside

Tourist information Free — Visitor information on the pier (GVHA); Princess calls it a welcome/visitor information area.
On the pier

Canada customs and immigration — Inspection areas at each pier; have the ID your line asks for.
Each pier

GVHA contact — 250-383-8300, gvha@gvha.ca. SSA Marine 24/7 operations: 250-590-1292.

Getting out of the port

Cruise shuttle — Run by Pacific Northwest Transportation Services (PNWTS) between the terminal and downtown; Princess says every 15 minutes, about 10 minutes' ride. No fare on an official page; third-party 2026 guides report roughly CA$10 to US$15 each way or round trip, dropping near the Fairmont Empress. PNWTS: 1-844-504-1394.
Terminal

Taxis — Metered only; GVHA's rules forbid flat rates, require drivers to take cash and cards, give receipts on request, and not refuse passengers with disabilities. Staging at Pier A and Pier B. Third-party guides estimate about CA$12 to $30 to downtown.
Pier A and Pier B
Access: GVHA requires 10% of for-hire vehicles and buses to be wheelchair accessible.

Pedicabs and rickshaws — Share a staging area on Pier A.
Pier A

Horse trolleys — Allowed only as shore excursions or by prior arrangement; operators must publish their rates.
Terminal staging area

Walking to the Inner Harbour Free — About 2.4 km. Princess says 20 to 30 minutes: head left (north) and follow Dallas Road, Kingston Street and Belleville Street to the harbour.
From the terminal exit
Access: Some uneven sections; a taxi or shuttle is kinder on the knees.

Shore excursions — PNWTS is the exclusive shore-excursion and dispatch provider at the terminal; tours load at designated bus areas.
Terminal bus staging

A whole day without leaving the port

A Victoria call is often only a few evening hours, so if I were staying close to the ship I'd keep it gentle. I'd browse the Market on the Pier on my way off, change a little money at the dockside exchange if I wanted to buy from a local maker, then walk out along the Breakwater to the lighthouse while the light lasts. Supper at the Breakwater Bistro, a slow look at the water, and back aboard. If you have more time and good legs, Fisherman's Wharf is a pleasant stroll into James Bay; for the Inner Harbour and the Empress, I'd take the shuttle rather than walk Dallas Road in the dark.

At the port with a cane, walker or wheelchair

- Ships dock at Ogden Point; no tender (Princess).
- GVHA describes the Breakwater as barrier-free.
- Taxi drivers may not refuse service to people with disabilities, and GVHA requires 10% of for-hire vehicles and buses to be wheelchair accessible.
- The walk to downtown is about 2.4 km; third-party guides call it mostly flat and paved with some uneven, poorly lit stretches at night.
- Public toilets are on the pier; no published details on accessible stalls. GVHA's accessibility page is at gvha.ca/accessibility.
- No published wheelchair or scooter rental at the terminal.

More on cruising with mobility & health needs. Rules differ by cruise line, so check with yours.

Questions about the port

▼ How far is the Victoria cruise terminal from downtown?
Ogden Point is about 2.4 km (1.49 miles) from the city centre. The walk takes roughly 20 to 30 minutes along Dallas Road; the shuttle takes about 10.

▼ What is there to do at the Victoria cruise port without going into town?
Walk the barrier-free Ogden Point Breakwater to the lighthouse, browse the Market on the Pier on cruise days, and eat at the Breakwater Bistro. Fisherman's Wharf is a short walk away.

▼ Can you exchange money at the Victoria cruise port?
Yes. GVHA says foreign currency exchange is available dockside at Ogden Point.

Where the port facts come from: Greater Victoria Harbour Authority: Terminal Information (30 October 2026); Greater Victoria Harbour Authority: Cruise (30 October 2026); GVHA / SSA Marine: Victoria Cruise Terminal User Guide 2026 (PDF) (30 October 2026); Greater Victoria Harbour Authority: Markets (30 October 2026); Destination Greater Victoria: Pacific Northwest Transportation Services (30 October 2026); Princess Cruises: Victoria, British Columbia cruise port (30 October 2026); Bucket List Guides: Victoria cruise port guide (April 2026) (30 October 2026); Alaska Cruise Shirts: Victoria cruise port to downtown (January 2026) (30 October 2026)

Why you stop here at all: a law from 1886

The Passenger Vessel Services Act, now **46 U.S.C. § 55103**. Customs and Border Protection quotes it like this:

> *"No vessel may transport passengers between ports or places in the United States to which the coastwise laws apply, either directly or via a foreign port, unless the vessel is: (1) wholly owned by U.S. citizens and (2) has a certificate of documentation with a coastwise endorsement..."*

Almost every large cruise ship is foreign-flagged and foreign-built. Seattle is a US port. Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway are US ports. So the voyage has to touch a foreign one.

There is a wrinkle worth knowing, and CBP publishes it: foreign ports are sorted into **nearby** and **distant**. Nearby covers North and Central America, Bermuda and the West Indies. Canada is nearby. CBP states that transportation via a nearby foreign port between two US points **still violates** the Act — which is why the Victoria call works for a round trip that starts and ends in Seattle, and why a genuine one-way Seattle-to-Alaska passenger voyage is a different legal animal altogether.

The penalty is **$798 per passenger** for anyone transported and landed in violation after 2 November 2015. It falls on the carrier, not on you.

Where we stop. CBP's publication gives the statute, the nearby-versus-distant rule and the penalty. It does not spell out, in the text we could retrieve, the exact mechanics of why a round trip returning to the same port is permissible with only a nearby foreign call. We have given you the law and the rule. We are not going to fill the gap with our own reasoning and present it as fact.

Documents: the part that actually matters

Two different agencies, two different lists, and you need to satisfy both.

Going into Canada — CBSA

For US citizens, the Canada Border Services Agency accepts a birth certificate, a certificate of citizenship or naturalization, a certificate of Indian status with photo ID, or a US enhanced driver's licence. Whatever you carry must collectively show **full name, date of birth and citizenship**.

CBSA's own recommendation, regardless of age, is a valid passport — it calls the passport *"the only reliable and universally accepted travel and ID document."*

Coming back into the US — CBP

Under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, US citizens arriving by sea may present a US passport, passport card, enhanced driver's licence, a Trusted Traveler card such as NEXUS or SENTRI, a US military ID with orders, or an American Indian Card.

And the one most Alaska cruisers actually rely on: *"U.S. citizens on closed-loop cruises (cruises that begin and end at the same U.S. port) are able to enter the United States with a birth certificate and government-issued photo ID."* **Children under 16** need only proof of citizenship, and CBP says the birth certificate *"can be original, photocopy, or certified copy."*

The gap that catches people. The birth-certificate route gets you home. It does not necessarily get you off the ship in a foreign port, and your cruise line may require a passport book even when neither government does. State Department guidance adds the one that really hurts: if you cannot return on the ship and have to fly home, **you will need a passport book**. Ours stay in the safe and we have never regretted carrying them.

How the ship itself is cleared

Worth knowing so the process makes sense: cruise ships are **fully cleared at their first port of arrival** in Canada, after which the ship can move freely between Canadian ports without reporting again. Manifests go to CBSA at least **96 hours** ahead. You may be asked to complete a Form E311

declaration. Currency or monetary instruments of **CAD $10,000 or more** must be declared. Undeclared food, plants or animals draw penalties of **$500 to $1,300**. And CBSA says plainly: *"Each time you leave the ship you are subject to examination."*

On a Seattle round trip, Victoria is usually the ship's only Canadian port, which makes it the first port of arrival.

Accessibility at Ogden Point

Victoria publishes more than most, which we appreciate:

- **Wheelchairs are available at the terminal.**
- There are **pet relief areas for service animals at each pier**.
- The facility *"complies with Canada's Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations."*
- The Breakwater walk is described as **barrier-free**.
- Accessibility enquiries go to the terminal operator, SSA Marine: ogdenpoint@ssamarine.ca or 250.386.1321.
- A 2022 Harbour Authority document states all shuttle buses must be wheelchair accessible and operators must keep 10% of the fleet wheelchair accessible. That document may have been superseded.

Butchart Gardens, and the timing trap

The Gardens are at 800 Benvenuto Ave, Brentwood Bay — **about 22 km, 13.5 miles, from Ogden Point**. The Gardens' own cruise page says it will take **approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes to reach them from the time your ship docks**.

Do that arithmetic against a call that starts at 8pm and ends just before midnight, and you will see why many people simply do not go. On a longer daytime call it is a different proposition.

MY VERDICT

If you get a long daytime call, Victoria is a genuinely lovely town and worth a proper day.

If you get the classic short evening call, my honest advice is to lower your ambitions and enjoy it anyway. Walk the Breakwater, look at the city lit up across the water, and be back aboard without stress. Do not book a 13.5-mile garden run against a four-hour window.

And carry the passport. Please carry the passport.

Questions people ask about Victoria

Why do Alaska cruises from Seattle stop in Victoria?

Because of the Passenger Vessel Services Act, 46 U.S.C. § 55103. Foreign-flagged ships may not transport passengers between US ports, and Seattle, Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway are all US ports, so the voyage must call at a foreign port. Victoria is the nearest one. The penalty for violating the Act is $798 per passenger, and it falls on the carrier.

Do I need a passport for Victoria, BC?

Not strictly, on a closed-loop cruise. CBP allows US citizens on cruises that begin and end at the same US port to re-enter with a birth certificate and government-issued photo ID, and CBSA accepts a birth certificate or enhanced driver's licence for entry to Canada. Both agencies recommend a passport, your cruise line may require one, and you would need a passport book to fly home if you missed the ship.

How far is downtown Victoria from the cruise terminal?

The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority states the city centre is approximately 2.4 km, or 1.49 miles, from Ogden Point. No official walking time is published.

Can I visit Butchart Gardens on a short Victoria call?

It is about 22 km — 13.5 miles — from Ogden Point, and the Gardens themselves say to allow approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes from the time your ship docks. On a short evening call that leaves very little time, so check your all-aboard before you book.

Is the Victoria cruise terminal accessible?

The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority publishes that wheelchairs are available at the terminal, that there are pet relief areas for service animals at each pier, and that the facility complies with Canada's Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations. The Breakwater walk is described as barrier-free.

Where these facts come from

- Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, terminal information (https://gvha.ca/deep-water-terminal/terminal-information/)
- Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, cruise operations (https://gvha.ca/cruise-landing-page/cruise-operations/)
- **Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, 2026 cruise schedule (PDF)** (/crew-library.html)
- **US Customs and Border Protection, Passenger Vessel Services Act informed compliance publication (PDF)** (/crew-library.html)
- US Customs and Border Protection, Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/western-hemisphere-travel-initiative)
- Canada Border Services Agency, acceptable travel documents (https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/td-dv-eng.html)
- Canada Border Services Agency, cruise ship passengers (https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/cscp-pdnc-eng.html)
- US State Department, cruise ship passengers (https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/cruise-ship-passengers.html)
- The Butchart Gardens, cruise passenger information (https://butchartgardens.com/cruise-passenger-information/)

Ports change their rules and their prices. Check the official pages above before you sail.

About the "I" on this page. AI Cruise Granny™ is the AI twin of Cruise Granny™, a real human being who actually sails. Every experience written here in the first person is hers. The AI twin is what writes it up, checks the facts against official sources and keeps it current. We tell you that openly on every page, because you should know who is talking to you. More about how this works.
